

**John Armstrong to George Washington, November 3, 1767, Letters to Washington and Accompanying Papers. Published by the Society of the Colonial Dames of America. Edited by Stanislaus Murray Hamilton.**

**FROM JOHN ARMSTRONG, ESQ.<sup>1</sup>**

CARLISLE, 3d. Novembr. 1767 —

DEAR SIR

With particular pleasure I acknowledge the receipt of your favour of the 21st. Sept. but know not when it may meet with a Safe conveyance, I shall detain the letter a little, and if none appear, shall risque it by the way of Winchester or Phila

Your Information that part of the Lands on the Yaughyaughgheny & Monongahela formerly conceived to lie within the bounds of yr. Governmt. is now likely to fall within the Limits of Pennsylvania may I think prove very true; but that part of it that respects the making of Entries or issuing Grants at Carlisle, is entirely vauge & without foundation, that Office being alwaies restricted to Philadelphia & kept by the Proprietaries Secretary (at present James Tilghman Esqr.) who in extraordinary Cases consults the Governor & Board of Property — wch. Board are only Assistants to the Governor he being Sole Commissioner of Property, nor is the Governor himself as yet by any means at Liberty to grant any Lands beyond the Aleghany Mountains until they are first purchas'd of the Six Nation Indians which purchase has been on foot for some time past & its said will be concluded by Sir Wm. Johnston this ensuing Spring or Summer, at which time 'tis also said Sir Wm. will make a Purchase on behalf of the Crown, of larger extent than the limits of Pennsylvania,

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perhaps West of Virginia, but of this I have no certainty — so that at present Sir, you may firmly depend that nothing cou'd be farther attempted than a distant or conditional application to Governor Penn for a Tract or two on them Waters when the Purchase shall be confirm'd, which done in your Polite manner & under good pretentions too, I'm persuaded cou'd give no Offense, nor easily fail of Success — and if any Offices of mine either on the present or any other Occasion, may be of the least use I beg you wou'd freely command them, as they are now tendered and shall be chearfully employed as often as you shall give me leave. and perhaps on the first opportunity I have of going to Town I may take the Liberty of feeling his Honrs. Pulse at least assist the foundation for any application you may afterwards think proper to make

As to the mode of taking up or having Lands granted in our Province, it has been considerably loose — the general intention of the Proprietaries has been a Competant Plantation of 2, or 300 acres to each Settler more especially since the Government became populous; but their Rule for various reasons has not been generally adher'd to, nor cou'd it well be, and however just in itself as a general guide, has been much eluded especially of late when the Artifice of borrowing Names, or taking Out Warrants & Orders of Survey in the Names of other People as tho' they were for their use & afterward procuring conveyances from those whose names they had made use of, has so much prevail'd yt. many & not the most deserving has ingross'd large quantities. this occasion'd some noise among the populace, has made the Governor and Agents very uneasy & indeed prevents the moderate gratification of many deserving persons to whom some distinction is due; for the cry is that we shall have no strong Settlements backward because of those ingrossers. In locating of Lands we generally describe the Spot as nearly as we can, and the Surveys are expected to be made as regular as the nature of the Land will any way admit, that is by a four lin'd figure in order to prevent Culling, but our Mountainous Country Seldom admits a regular Survey, and the discretion of the Surveyor must take place.

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As to the expence of our Proprietary Land the terms are now somewhat different from what they have been, £15, IOs. Currency consideration Money per hundred Acres & one halfpenny Sterling per Acre ground Rent per Annum, has formerly been the price, but latterly they have fix'd the Consideration money per hundred Acres only at £5 Sterling & the yearly Quit Rent is rais'd to One penny Sterling per Acre — what the Next purchase beyond the Mountains may be I cannot tell but immagin it will be on the terms last described above, as landed people seldom come down Stairs, and indeed there are so many desirous of taking up lands, that they know very well that their terms will be comply'd with tho' so distant from trade & other conveniences of life. In regard to the line now running betwixt us and Mary-land — it will very probably be establish'd, but that in my opinion, must at least be pronounc'd by the Commissioners on each Side the question, or perhaps be confirm'd by the Partys on the other Side the Atlantick before it be a final boundary to these provinces, and how far yt. consideration may happen to retard the grant of Lands near ye line may be questionable. I know a Certain Case depending near the line, where neither Province at present, seem willing to assume the Jurisdiction.<sup>2</sup> I'm sorry these Subjects had not happen'd to Occur when Hast the pleasure of seeing you — but here permit a Single remark flowing from Old friendship, and it shall be on the infatuating Game of Card-playing, of which on thirty years observation I am not able to say so much good, as a witty person once did of what he Censur'd as a Culpable & extravagant piece of Dress *that it cover'd a multitude of Sins*; but that game always unfriendly to Society, turns conversation out of Doors, and curtails our opportunities to mutual good. I can easily presume on your good nature to forgive this piece of unfashionable freedom, and Believe me to be with great respect —

Dear Sir

Your Most Obedt. And Most humbl. Servt. JOHN ARMSTRONG

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P. S. Mrs Armstrong and myself beg you'll please to present our best respects to your Lady & also to yr. worthy Neighbours, Coll. Fairfax & Lady. we have both I hope been better'd by the Warm Springs, except some returns of the Rheumitism that attend Mrs Armstrong, which I apprehend is so constitutional yt. we can scarcely expect a perfect cure. J. A.

20th. Decembr.

We have just recd. information that Genrl. Gage has wrote Governor Penn, that Sir Wm. Johnson apprehends the Indians will break out this ensuing Spring — and that the Generals letter is conceiv'd in such terms as has mov'd the Governor to advise in Council whether the Assembly shou'd be call'd; but as they Sit early in Janry. the Governor has not issu'd a Summons — May God avert such a Calamitous Scene, for shou'd it happen a third time so near together, Our Frontier People appear to be undone. Capt. Callendor has very lately recd. a letter from a Trader at ye. lower Shawna Town, who says that them Indians are at present very quiet, but express some fears of your Government 'tis also said that Mr. Croghan has lately had an amicable interview wth. various Tribes at Detroit. these last appear to be agst. Sir Wms. Intelligence.<sup>3</sup>

1 Major-General John Armstrong was born in Ireland in 1720, and died at Carlisle, Pa., March 9, 1795. He emigrated to Pennsylvania between the years 1745 and 1748, and settled in the Kittatinny valley. He was by profession a surveyor, and in that capacity rendered many important services to the Colony. In 1756 he entered the military life as a private soldier, and steadily rose, until, on June 5, 1777, he was commissioned Major-General and Commander of the Pennsylvania troops. Previous to the Revolution he performed many important services in expeditions against the Indians. In November, 1778, he was elected a member of Congress. A fort erected at Kittanning in 1779 was named in his honor, and in 1800 a new county was designated Armstrong County. He was the father of General John Armstrong, Secretary of War under Madison.

2 Many perplexing questions arose at this time in consequence of the re-adjustment of the dividing line. William Edmiston wrote to Lord Baltimore in July, 1767: "In the year 1702 a large Quantity of Land was purchased of Mr. Penn by a Number of Adventurers, which was located to them in the Township of West Nottingham in the lower End of Chester County nearly adjoining to what was then supposed to be the Boundary between the Provinces of Pennsylvania and Maryland; but as it appears by the late Settlement of the Line between the Two Provinces that great part of the Tract Purchased as afordsd of Mr. Penn falls within the Province of Maryland my humble request is that I may obtain from my Lord Baltimore a Patent for such Part of the sd. Land as I now Inherit from my Father, who was one of the Original Purchasers and which is part of what falls into the Province of Maryland as aforesaid."

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3 In 1767–68, another savage war menaced the colonists on account of the dissatisfaction of the Indians in regard to the encroachments on their lands. At Sir William Johnson's suggestion, a great council was held at Fort Stanwix in the latter part of October, 1768, at which over two thousand Indians were present, besides the governors of several of the colonies. A treaty was here concluded on November 5, in which the Six Nations relinquished their claim to all the land within a boundary extending from near Lake Ontario, at the junction of Canada and Wood Creeks, to Owego on the Susquehanna, thence through Pennsylvania, Maryland, etc., to the mouth of the Tennessee. This was called the New Purchase.